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ABSTRACT

The examination of teachers' perceptions of the role of parent and teacher participation in shared decision making provides insight on whether teachers view themselves as influencing decision making at their schools. The study explored the perceptions that Florida teachers of the year have about the involvement of teachers, administrators, and parents in schoolwide decision making and the influence of teachers and parents on decisions made in specific areas. The data used in this study is from a survey that was mailed to 1996 and 1997 Florida Teachers of the Year, representing 67 counties. The award teachers received three copies of the survey with instructions for them to select two associate teachers to complete and return two of the surveys. The return rate was 49.5 percent, including 92 award teachers. Results of principal components analyses suggest that survey item intercorrelations were explained by three constructs. These constructs, identified as Shared Decision Making, Teacher Influence and Parent Influence, summarized the respondents' perceptions regarding the nature of the role of parent and teacher participation in making shared decisions. The responses on teacher influence were divided into two categories--High and Low--to further examine possible if differences between these two groups may be attributed to teacher and school characteristics. The majority of the respondents, 67.6%, viewed themselves as having high influence; 73% viewed parents as having high influence too. Among respondents, teachers in the middle and high school are more likely to view themselves as having low influence in decision making, whereas elementary school teachers are more likely to view themselves as having high influence in decision making. Teachers who view themselves as having high influence tend to express greater satisfaction with the level of shared decision making at their school than those teachers who view themselves as having low influence in decision making. Contains 31 references. (Author/SM)

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Teacher Perceptions of Parent and Teacher Participation in Shared Decision Making

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Teacher Perceptions of Parent and Teacher Participation in Shared Decision Making

Abstract

The examination of teachers' perceptions of the role of parent and teacher participation in shared decision making provides insight on whether teachers view themselves as influencing decision making at their schools. This study explores the perceptions that Florida teachers of the year - award teachers - have about the involvement of teachers, administrators and parents in schoolwide decision making, and about the influence that teachers and parents have in their school on decisions made in specific areas. The data used in this study is from a survey that was mailed to 1996 and 1997 Florida Teachers the Year, representing 67 counties. The award teachers received three copies of the survey with instructions for them to select two associate teachers to complete and return two of the surveys. The return rate was 49.5 percent (N=199), including 92 award teachers from both years.

Results of principal components analyses suggest that survey item intercorrelations were explained by three constructs which summarize the respondents' perceptions regarding the nature of the role of parent and teacher participation in shared decision making; theses constructs are identified as Shared Decision Making, Teacher Influence and Parent Influence. Teacher Influence is reduced to two groups - High and Low - to further examine possible differences between these two groups that may be attributed to teacher and school characteristics. The majority of the respondents, 67.6%, viewed themselves as having high influence; 73% viewed parents as having high influence too.

Chi squares indicate significant differences between the two groups only in school characteristics. Among respondents, teachers in the middle and high school are more likely to view themselves as having low influence in decision making, whereas elementary school teachers are more likely to view themselves as having high influence in decision making. Discriminant analyses identify four decision making variables as contributing in distinguishing between the two teacher groups. Teachers who view themselves as having high influence tend to express greater satisfaction with the level of shared decision making at their school than those teachers who view themselves as having low influence in decision making.

Introduction

Historically, children's education at school was clearly limited to teachers only, without any parent involvement. It was thought that parents did not have an essential role. The relationship between parents and teachers was characterized by clearly defined roles which placed teachers as the experts and parents as passive supporters of the school. Recently, however, school restructuring has led to the narrowing of this relationship in light of the increasing emphasis on teacher professionalism. School restructuring requires teachers and parents to participate in school shared decision-making. Yet, this shift toward a collaborative relationship has encountered unexpected barriers based on control issues. Who decides? Who has the most influence? Who should have the most influence? (Hess, 1992; Fine, 1993; Sarason, 1995). In the context of decision making, participation becomes a manifestation of power in that it is a form of exerting authority or influence (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980).

Teacher professionalism has been associated consistently with restructuring and teacher empowerment (Cuban, 1990; Maeroff, 1988). Empowerment is defined as the opportunities an individual has for autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation, in decision making in organizations (Lightfoot, 1986). For teachers, most literature on professionalism has underscored their knowledge expertise, and their role in decision making. The knowledge of the teaching profession empowers teachers to proceed with a sense of expertise and authority (Lichtenstein, McLaughlin & Knudsen, 1991). Teacher professionalism assumes that teachers are best able to make decisions that would improve their classroom instruction because of their firsthand knowledge of their students and the curriculum (Wasley, 1991). Emphasis on knowledge and expertise, however, increases

the distance between teachers and parents, placing the former in the position of experts that assist uninformed parents in doing what is right for education. Crowson (1992) observes that professionalism leads schools to a distancing between parental involvement and teachers' work roles.

It is not surprising, then, that teachers are more comfortable with parents becoming involved in schools as spectators who monitor their children's achievement and who support school programs by assisting with homework and projects (Vandergrift & Greene, 1992). Brian (1994) reports that the teachers and principals favor parent support but not involvement in decision making; volunteering was the most widely accepted form of parental involvement. Teachers are likely to have more reservations about collaborating with parents when professional knowledge and expertise are stressed as grounds for participating in decision making. The distinction constrains parent involvement into professionally accepted roles. Thus, while teachers may express positive attitudes about parent involvement (Swap, 1991), they do not systematically encourage it. Of course, parents do not always participate even when they are encouraged to do so, which tends to reaffirm teachers' perception of low parent interest.

In spite of the limited encouragement from schools, parent involvement is, also, considered an essential component of school restructuring. Site-based management and participatory decision making are indicative of parent empowerment, and are viewed as conducive to change. Parents are increasingly assuming an active role in advocacy groups and in local school councils (Ehman, 1995; Etheridge, Hall & Etheridge, 1995; Comer & Haynes, 1991). The role of parent as advocate means that parents are demanding a share in decision-making surrounding the education of children and

insisting on the value of parental knowledge about particular needs of children. The widespread support for parent involvement in education is due to compelling evidence of its strong contribution to student achievement and school quality (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Goldberg & Arzubiaga, 1994; Madigan, 1994; Brian, 1994; Epstein, 1991).

Despite the evidence of the positive effects of parent involvement, it seems unlikely that its potential will be tapped if there is a perception of competing roles for influence in decision-making. Lightfoot (1981) recognizes the potentially damaging tension in the ambiguity of roles between teachers and parents, and she stresses the importance of defining areas of responsibility and competence. Empowering parents and facilitating involvement can be a productive and positive force within the school system provided all participants are aware of the nature of the roles they play and of the ways in which they represent particular interest groups. Bauch and Goldring (1998) suggest a partnership relationship whereby both teachers and parents have a strong sense of empowerment. In other words, empowerment is not viewed as shifting power over to someone or something or another group, but as enabling both to have power, that is, authority or influence to do something.

Although educational reforms and policies, such as Goals 2000 (National Education Goals Panel, 1997), call for the building of partnerships, the impetus toward a collaborative parent-teacher relationship remains mostly in the hands of the school. Research findings (e.g., Brian, 1994; Epstein, 1995) indicate that the role of the teacher and school have a greater influence on parent involvement than any other parent demographic factor. Hence, the interest in this is study to explore the role of parent and teacher participation in shared decision-making as perceived by teachers in reference to

their school situations.

Conceptual Framework

Bauch and Goldring (1998) describe the new roles as reflecting a fluctuation of influence or power. The patterns of participation are illustrated in a model (Figure 1) consisting of four quadrants that depict participation as a function of influence or power on school decisions; the mode of participation changes as power increases. The two axes represent parents and teachers, with each axis showing a continuum from very little to considerable power or influence on school decisions (Bauch & Goldring, 1998). The model suggests a framework for understanding teacher-parent relationships in terms of power. Although the complexity of these power relationships connote a broad range of varying levels of parent and teacher participation, the model is particularly helpful in discerning the conflicting distinctions between teacher professionalism and parent empowerment.

At one extreme of the parent teacher axes is the traditional or bureaucratic mode of participation. Teachers and parents are not involved in decision making; power is deferred to those at the top of a hierarchical system (Acker-Hocever, Bauch & Berman, 1997). Teachers carry out decisions made at the top and the parents are the passive supporters (Crowson, 1992). School restructuring represents a diametrical shift in the model toward a partnership or communal mode of participation, with teachers and parents having more power on school decisions. However, the partnership becomes difficult to establish when either group exerts a disproportionate amount of influence.

On the one hand, teachers' professionalism, as the prevalent mode of participation, is primarily based on knowledge expertise. Teachers make use of their professional prerogative in their influence on decisions and in their relationship with parents; knowledge of the teaching profession is what empowers teachers (Lichtenstein, McLaughlin & Knudsen, 1991). Parents assume the role of "indirect clients" with no

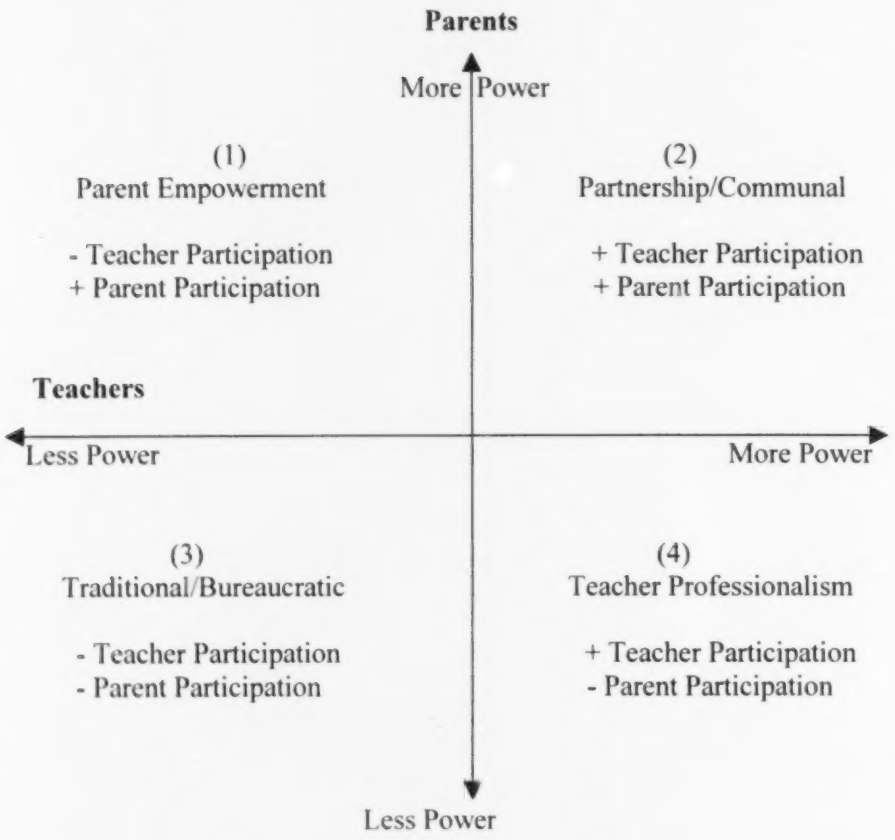
voice or influence, and their involvement is limited to "zones of tolerance"(Bauch & Goldring, 1998). In Brian's study (1994), for instance, teachers and principals accepted parent support in areas that did not involve decision making, such as volunteering.

On the other hand, the presence of strong parent advocacy groups who are actively engaged as vocal members of local school councils reflects a shift in the direction of influence, with parent empowerment as the mode of participation. The strength of parent participation often is derived from the schools' failure to respond to parent needs and concerns regarding the education of their children (Bauch & Goldring, 1998). Parents' call for change is a challenge to the schools' educational practices and an expression of waning confidence in teachers' effectiveness. Thus, teachers may perceive that they are unlikely to have any voice or influence on school decisions.

Clearly, parent-teacher relationships are not limited to these four modes of participation. The complexity of the relationship suggests a broad range of interrelationships, some driven by the issues involved and others simply entangled by the ambiguity of roles between teachers and parents. The model serves as a template for understanding changing teacher and parent roles in the context of power or influence on school decisions.

Figure 1

Parent-teacher Participation in the Context of School Decision Making (Bauch & Goldring, 1998, p. 25).



Research Questions

This study is concerned with Florida award teachers' perceptions about the involvement of teachers, administrators and parents in schoolwide decision making. Additionally, it explores perceptions teachers have regarding the influence teachers and parents actually have in their schools on decisions made in specific areas. Award teachers were used because, as teacher leaders, they were assumed to play an influential role in school decision making. Specifically, this study focuses on three research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers value shared decision making, and perceive themselves and parents as having influence in decision making?
2. How do teachers who perceive themselves as having high influence on schoolwide decision making differ from those who have low influence based on teacher and school demographic characteristics and shared decision making variables (i.e., classroom autonomy, school's relationship with parents and teachers' satisfaction with shared decision making)?
3. Which teacher and school demographic characteristics and shared decision making variables differentiate between teachers who perceive themselves as having low and high influence in school decision making?

The study reported here is part of a larger study of teacher empowerment consisting of multiple data sources and field methods conducted in school systems in Nova Scotia, Florida, Georgia, and Alabama (Acker-Hocevar, MacGregor & Touchton, 1995; Acker-Hocevar, Bauch & Berman, 1997. The survey instrument used in this study is a portion of those used previously (Bauch & Goldring, 1996) in studies of parent involvement.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected during the spring and fall of 1996. The study focused on a selected group of Florida teachers who were chosen on the basis of a two-step process. First, the study included teachers who were honored as teachers of the year in their respective Florida counties during 1995 and 1996 and those honored the following year during 1996 and 1997. These teachers were contacted by telephone to request their participation in the completion of a 96-item survey on teacher empowerment and decision making. The award teachers were asked to distribute two copies of the survey to non-award teachers in their schools who might hold "differing views from their own on the school."

Sample and Data collection

Packets were mailed to 1996 Florida award teachers representing 67 counties in late spring 1996. Included in the packets were three copies of the surveys, three copies of the participants' letters, and an introductory letter to the award participant with three stamped, self-addressed return envelopes. Of the three surveys mailed to each award teacher, two were to be filled out by non-award teachers. Surveys were mailed to the 1997 Florida Teacher of the Year cohort in a similar manner. Of the 402 surveys that were mailed (67 packets per year to each award teacher, each packet containing three surveys), 49.5% (N=199) were completed and returned. The following diagram identifies the respondents by year and award status:

Teacher respondents by year

	1996	1997	Total
Award	53	39	92
Non-award	61	46	107
Total	114	85	199

Each survey was labeled with a five-digit identification number prior to mailing them. The first two digits identified the county (1 to 67), the next two digits identified the year (96 or 97), and the last digit identified award status. Since a design was employed to compare award and non-award teachers' perspectives, the research team made an apriori decision to identify award teacher surveys as "respondent number one" and all non-award teacher surveys as "respondent number two." Award teachers were instructed to complete the survey with the identification number ending in "1." The sample included 92 award teachers and 107 non-award teachers.

Description of the Sample

Teacher and school demographic characteristics for the total sample are presented in Table one. Approximately fifty percent of the respondents are award teachers; about fifty percent of the teachers are between 41 and 50 years old. There are almost as many teachers with a master's degree as with a bachelor's degree. Most of the sample consists of white, female teachers assigned to regular classroom teaching positions. There is an even distribution of teaching experience among the respondents, with a third having less then 13 years of experience, another third with 14 to 20 years of experience, and another third with more than 21 years of experience. Teachers in the sample are mostly from elementary (45.9%) and rural (57%) schools.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	TOTAL (N=199)	(%)
Award Status		
Teacher of the Year	92	(46.4
Other Teacher	107	(53.6
Age		
21-30	11	(5.6)
31-40	54	(26.7)
41-50	98	(49.7)
51-60	31	(15.9)
Over 60	4	(2.1)
Education		
Bachelor's	101	(51.0)
Master's	83	(52.3)
Ed. S/Doctorate	13	(6.7)
Ethnicity		
White	180	(91.7)
Minority	16	(8.3)
Gender		
Male	34	(17.5)
Female	163	(82.5)
Position		
Regular teacher	153	(80.3)
Special teacher	38	(19.7)
Teaching experience		
0-13 years	66	(33.3)
14-20 years	60	(29.7)
21+ years	72	(36.9)
School Level		
Elementary	92	(45.9)
Middle	43	(21.9)
High school	64	(32.1)
Location of School		
Rural	108	(57.3)
Urban	28	(14.6)
Suburban	52	(28.1)

Instrumentation

The analyses were conducted on data from four sections of the survey. The first eight survey items requested teacher demographic information (gender, ethnicity, age, highest degree, current position, years of teaching experience, school level, and type of school community). The section on school decision-making perspectives consists of ten survey variables. Teachers indicated their perspectives about the degree of their involvement with administrators, and sometimes parents, in schoolwide decision-making. Response options were 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (not sure), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The response order for three negatively-worded items, viiq85-87, was reversed to provide for positive correlations among all items.

The section on school decision-making practices consists of fifteen survey items. Items in this section assess the extent to which the teacher respondents perceived teachers in their school generally have influence in decisions made in fifteen specified areas. Response options were 1 (none), 2 (very little), 3 (not sure), 4 (some), 5 (a great deal). The fourth section consists also of fifteen similar items, which assess the extent to which teacher respondents perceived parents in their school to have influence in decisions made in the same areas.

Lastly, two survey items asked teachers to summarize their perceptions of their school relationship to parents (iiq95), and the teachers' satisfaction with the level of shared decision-making at their school (iiq96). There were four response options for the type of school-parent relationship: 1 (partnership), 2 (teacher professionalism), 3 (parent empowerment), and 4 (no partnership). These response options match the patterns of participation that Bauch and Goldring (1998) describe in their model for teacher-parent

participation in school decision-making. The response options to satisfaction with the level of shared decision-making at school were 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (not sure), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree).

To address the research questions, the responses to these four sections of the survey were used in different analyses that included factor analysis, t-tests and chi squares, and discriminant analysis. Factor analysis was employed to identify items that were strongly associated and that, together, formed a conceptually cohesive construct. The t-tests and chi-squares allowed for comparisons of ordinal and nominal data, respectively. Chi square analyses examined the relationship between the two teacher groups – Low and High Teacher Influence, and teacher and school characteristics. Discriminant analysis was used to determine differences between the two teacher groups in terms of teacher and school characteristics; missing data were replaced with the mean[1]. Discrimant analysis is a multivariate procedure that distinguishes between groups of respondents on the basis of a series of discriminating variables. The goal of the analysis is to find a linear combination of variables that maximizes the differences between the two groups in the sample to determine which characteristics distinguish between Low Teacher Influence and High Teacher Influence groups.

Factor Analysis

To identify the role of parent and teacher participation in shared decision making as perceived by teachers in reference to their school situations, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was used with each section of the survey related to school decision making. Generally, rotation will be desirable because it simplifies the factor

[1] There were 29 cases with at least one missing discriminating variable, two cases with missing or out-of-range group codes, and one case with both.

structure and it is usually difficult to determine whether unrotated factors will be meaningful or not. The Varimax method maximizes the sum of variance of required loadings of the factor matrix, and there tend to be some high loadings and some loadings near zero in each column of the matrix.

The objective of the factor analysis was to identify the survey items that were highly associated with each other and that, together, formed conceptual constructs pertaining to school decision-making perspectives and practices. The item responses in each section were interpreted as reflecting a construct if loadings were .6 or higher[2], and if the items correlated significantly with a Pearson r value of .31 or higher. The loading is the correlation of the item and the construct, and the loading squared is the amount of the item's total variance accounted for by the construct. Thus a loading of .6 denotes that 36 percent of the variance of each item is accounted for by the construct.

Constructs

Results of the factor analysis suggested that, for each section, the item intercorrelations were explained by a construct. These three constructs provide a summary of the teachers' perceptions regarding the nature of the role of parent and teacher participation in shared decision making. Six items were included in the first construct, which was labeled **Shared Decision-Making Beliefs** (important to be a successful teacher, for increased professionalism, school improvement, job satisfaction, accountability, and for a better school). The other four items either failed to load above .6 or had a correlation coefficient lower than .31 and were dropped. The Eigenvalue for this construct was 4.83, for explanation of 48.3% of the variance. Appendix A presents

[2] Loadings that are +.5 or greater are considered practically significant (Hair, Anderson, & Taltham, 1995).

the items that form the three shared decision-making constructs. The varimax rotation yielded similar results; only the loading for one of the six variables was lower then .6. The internal consistency of the Shared Decision-Making construct was .92 (Cronbach's alpha).

The other two constructs, which corresponded to sections two and three, were labeled **Teacher Influence** and **Parent Influence**, respectively. Seven survey items were included in the Teacher Influence construct; of the remaining six items, three had loadings higher than .6, but the correlation coefficients had values less then .31. The Eigenvalue for the Teacher Influence construct was 5.60 for explanation of 37.34% of the variance. The internal consistency for the Teacher Influence construct was .84 (Cronbach's alpha). The items in the Teacher Influence construct include such areas as setting school goals, and inservice.

Parent Influence, consisted of six of the fifteen items in this section; the other nine failed to load above .6 or had correlation coefficients lower than .31 and were dropped. This construct consisted of items pertaining to areas of influence that were similar to those in the Teacher Influence construct (setting discipline and grading policies, academic standards and what is taught); an additional item in Parent Influence was the amount of homework assigned. The Eigenvalue for the Parent Influence construct was 5.78, for explanation of 38.5% of the variance. The internal consistency for the Parent Influence construct was .84 (Cronbach's Alpha).

Results

Research Question One

To what extent do teachers value shared decision making and perceive themselves and parents as having influence in decision making?

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the three shared decision-making constructs. All three constructs are normally distributed, though Shared Decision-Making Beliefs is negatively skewed (-1.38) and leptokurtic (3.97). The high mean (x=4.50, s.d.=0.52) for Shared Decision-Making Beliefs indicates that this group of teachers strongly agree that shared decision making is important for schoolwide success. Although the group perceives that teachers in their school have some influence in decision making (x=3.66, s.d.=0.84), they perceive parents as not having much influence (x=2.15, s.d.=0.81).

TABLE 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, and Kurtosis for the Shared Decision-Making Constructs

	Shared Decision-Making Beliefs	Teacher Influence	Parent Influence
Mean (X)	4.50	3.66	2.16
Standard Deviation	.52	.84	.81
Skewness	-1.38	-.62	.51
Kurtosis	3.97	-.21	-.44

The three constructs represent the respondents' perceptions of decision-making at their schools. As such, the constructs were tested for a possible association among themselves as well as with other possible indicators of decision-making perspectives. The latter included the last two survey items, viiq95[3] and viiq96[4] and an additional construct – **Classroom Autonomy** - from part two of the survey. This construct[5] from a previous study (Acker-Hocevar, Bauch, & Berman, 1996) characterized teachers'

[3] This item identifies the teachers' perception of the school's relationship to parents: no partnership (1), parent empowerment (2), teacher professionalism (3), and partnership (4).

[4] This item indicates the teachers' satisfaction with level of shared decision making at their school; the five possible responses were collapsed to two groups: disagree (1) and agree (2).

perception of power as Autonomy in classroom decision-making. Because of its association with decision-making at the classroom level, this construct would be expected to be associated with the three constructs. To arrive at Classroom Autonomy, the same criteria were used with respect to loading and correlation coefficient values (Appendix B). Classroom Autonomy correlated significantly with Shared Decision-Making Beliefs ($r=.168$, $p<.05$), Teacher Influence ($r=.415$, $p<.001$), Parent Influence ($r=.204$, $p<.01$), School's Relationship to Parents ($r=.358$, $p<.001$), and Teacher's Satisfaction with Decision Making ($r=.341$, $p<.001$).

To determine if teachers who perceive themselves as having influence in schoolwide decisions also view parents similarly, the responses to the Teacher Influence construct were collapsed from five to two: a Low Influence group, which combined teachers who saw themselves as having no influence, very little influence or not sure, and a High Influence group, which combined teachers who saw themselves as having some or a great deal of influence. A t-test was conducted to determine if these two groups differed significantly in their perception of parents' influence in decision making; Teacher Influence was the independent variable and Parent Influence was the dependent variable. Additional t-tests were conducted with Shared Decision-Making Beliefs and Classroom Autonomy and item viiq96 as dependent variables. The assumption of normal distribution (N=199) and homogeneity or equality of variance were met in each t-test. Table 3 provides means and standard deviations of the constructs Parent Influence, Shared Decision-Making Beliefs, Classroom Autonomy, and Satisfied with Shared Decision Making (viiq96) by Teacher Influence groups.

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[5] Similar criteria were used as with the decision-making constructs: loading>.6 and correlation coefficient $r \geq .31$.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations and Range for Shared Decision-Making Beliefs, Parent Influence, Classroom Autonomy, Satisfied with Shared Decision Making by Teacher Influence

	Teacher Influence			
	High		Low	
Constructs+	X	S.D.	X	S.D.
Parent Influence*	2.35	.81	1.77	.66
Shared Decision-Making Beliefs	4.54	.53	4.42	.49
Classroom Autonomy*	3.87	.58	3.36	.83
Satisfied with Shared Decision Making*	3.86	1.38	2.37	1.42

+ Five-point Scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)
*$p \leq .001$ t-test

There is a significant difference [$t(185)=23.57$, $p \leq .001$)] between teachers who view themselves as having high influence in schoolwide decisions and those that do not with respect to their perception of parent influence. Teachers who see themselves as having low influence on schoolwide decisions view parents similarly ($x=1.77$, s.d.=.66). However, teachers who perceive themselves as having high influence in schoolwide decisions, have a slightly higher, but significant perception of parents' influence in schoolwide decisions ($x=2.35$, s.d.=.81). The High Teacher Influence group views parents as, also, having relative influence in schoolwide decision making.

Most of the respondents, 60.3%, were identified as fitting the teacher professionalism mode of participation; the majority perceived teachers to have influence in decision making but not parents. About a third of the respondents, 32.4%, viewed teachers and parents as having little influence (traditional/bureaucratic mode). Very few, 7.3%, perceived teachers and parents as having considerable influence in decision making (partnership mode).

There were significant differences between the two groups with respect to

Classroom Autonomy [t(191)=23.94, p≤ .001)] and Satisfied Shared Decision Making [t(194)=48.95, p≤ .001)]. Teacher who perceive themselves as having high influence in decision making view themselves as having greater autonomy in the classroom (x=3.87, s.d.=.58) than teachers who consider themselves as having low influence (x=3.36, s.d.=.83). The High Influence group is more satisfied (x=3.86, s.d.=1.38) with the level of shared decision making in their school than the Low Teacher Influence group (x=2.37, s.d.=1.42). There was no significant difference between the two groups with respect to Shared Decision-Making Beliefs. Regardless of how much influence they perceive to have in school decisions, teachers in this sample strongly agree that shared decision making is important for school success; the mean for the total group was 4.50, s.d.=.52.

Research Question Two

How do teachers who perceive themselves as having high influence on schoolwide decision making differ from those who have low influence based on teacher and school demographic characteristics and shared decision making variables (i.e., classroom autonomy, school's relationship with parents and teachers' satisfaction with shared decision making)?

The next step was to determine if the observed differences in teachers' perceptions could be attributed to teacher and school characteristics. To test for significant differences, chi square analyses were conducted since the data for teacher and school characteristics were nominal. Teacher and school characteristics were treated as independent variables and Teacher Influence, with its Low and High subgroups, as the dependent variable. The three teacher characteristics that were examined were award status (two subgroups), highest degree (three subgroups) and years of teaching experience (three subgroups). School characteristics included Parent Influence[6], Classroom

[6] For the purpose of the chi square analysis, the groups in the Parent Influence construct were collapsed from five to two; Low (strongly disagree, disagree and not sure) and High (Agree and strongly agree).

Autonomy[7], School's Partnership with Parents, Satisfaction with Shared Decision Making[8] and School Level. The predominance of elementary schools in the sample (48%) heavily biased an assessment of any significance of level of school. To clarify the interpretation of level of school the values for middle and high school were combined to allow for a more accurate assessment.

The results of the chi square analyses indicate that there is a significant difference in how Teacher Influence is perceived based on all five school characteristics: Parent Influence [$X^2(1)=4.77$, $p<.05$], Classroom Autonomy [$X^2(1)=13.23$, $p<.001$], School's Partnership with Parents [$X^2(1)=40.37$, $p<.001$], Satisfaction with Shared Decision Making [$X^2(1)=49.57$, $p<.001$], and School Level [$X^2(1)=4.35$, $p<.05$]. Although most of the respondents (92.5%) perceived parents to have low influence in decision making, there were more teachers in the High Teacher Influence group (10.5%) than in the Low Influence group (1.6%) who viewed parents as having high influence in decision making. Similarly, more teachers in the High Teacher Influence Group (78.1%) than in the Low Influence group (52.4%) equate power to classroom autonomy. The standard residual for the Low Teacher Influence and Low Classroom Autonomy group was 2.5, which suggests that more of these teachers were expected to fall in the High Classroom Autonomy group. A category with a standardized residual greater than 2.00 suggests that the category is a major contributor to the significant chi-square value (Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs, 1994).

The school's relationship to parents was identified as one of partnership by fifty

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[7] For the purpose of the chi square analysis, the groups in the Classroom Autonomy construct were collapsed from five to two; Low (strongly disagree, disagree and not sure) and High (Agree and strongly agree).

[8] For the purpose of the chi square analysis, the groups in this variable (viiq96) were collapsed from five to

percent of the respondents, which included a third (34.1%, standardized residual=2.1) of the teachers in the High Teacher Influence group compared to only 6.3% (standardized residual=-3.0) of those in the Low Teacher Influence group. Conversely, a larger proportion of the Low Teacher Influence group (42.2%, standardized residual=3.6) identified the relationship as one of no partnership compared to the High Teacher Influence group (10.6%, standardized residual=-2.6). Teachers in the sample who view themselves as having high influence in decision making are more likely describe the school's relationship to parents as one of partnership.

Another significant difference was found among the two groups regarding the satisfaction with the level of shared decision making at the school. A much larger proportion of the High Teacher Influence group (62.3%, standardized residual=2.5), compared to the Low Teacher Influence group ((25%, standardized residual=-3.2). On the other hand, most of the Low Teacher Influence group (75%, standardized residual=4.3) expressed low satisfaction with the level of shared decision making compared to the High Teacher Influence group (37.7%, standardized residual=-3). In the sample, teachers who viewed themselves as having high influence in decision making tend to express satisfaction with the level of shared decision making in their school.

Lastly, the two Teacher Influence groups (Low and High) showed significant differences with respect to school level. There was an even distribution of elementary and middle/high school teachers in the High Teacher Influence group. However, there were almost twice as many middle/senior high school teachers (64.6%) in the Low Teacher Influence group than elementary school teachers (35.4%). Among the respondents, teachers in middle and high school are more likely to view themselves as

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two; Low (strongly disagree, disagree and not sure) and High (Agree and strongly agree).

having low influence in decision making. Table 4 provides the distribution of teacher and school characteristics by Teacher Influence groups.

Table 4. Distribution of Teacher Influence Groups by Teacher and School Characteristics

VARIABLE	High Teacher Influence % (N=131)	Low Teacher Influence % (N=65)	Total (N=196)
Teacher Demographic Characteristics			
Award Status			
Teacher of the Year	50.4	38.5	46.4
Other Teacher	49.6	61.5	53.6
Highest Degree			
B.A or B.S.	49.6	53.8	51.0
MA. or M.S.	43.4	40.0	42.3
Ed. Spec/Doctorate	7.0	6.2	6.7
Years of Teaching Experience			
0 - 13 years	32.3	35.4	33.3
14 - 20 years	26.9	35.4	29.7
21+ years	40.8	29.2	36.9
School Demographic Characteristics			
*School Level**			
Elementary	51.1	35.4	45.9
Middle/High School	48.9	64.6	54.1
Decision Making Variables			
Parent Influence*			
High	10.5	1.6	7.5
Low	89.5	98.4	92.5
Classroom Autonomy***			
High	78.1	52.4	69.6
Low	21.9	47.6	30.4
School's Partnership with Parents***			
No Partnership	10.6	42.2	21.4
Parent Empowerment	.8	7.8	3.2
Teacher Professionalism	54.5	43.8	50.8
Partnership	34.1	6.3	24.6
Satisfaction with Shared Dec.-Making***			
High	62.3	25.0	50.0
Low	37.7	75.0	50.0

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001 CHI-SQUARE

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Research Question Three

Which teacher and school demographic characteristics and shared decision making variables differentiate between teachers who perceive themselves as having low and high influence in school decision?

The two previous research questions led to the grouping of the teachers in the sample based on their perception of their influence on decision making at their schools. Moreover, the groups were found to have significant differences with respect to five school characteristics. The next, and last, step involved a discriminant analysis to distinguish between the two groups of respondents, High and Low Teacher Influence, with teacher and school characteristics as possible discriminating variables.

Eight variables (teacher and school characteristics) were tested in the analysis to distinguish between Low Teacher Influence and High Teacher Influence groups. The Mahalanobis D^2 measure[9] was used in the stepwise procedure, which would make it possible to observe where the discrimination would occur if all variables were included in the model. The stepwise procedure began with all of the variables excluded from the model and, then, selected the variable that maximized the Mahalanobis distance between the two groups. The first variable included in the model, or linear composite, was School's Partnership with Parents. In addition, three other variables were included in the model: Parent Influence Parents, Satisfaction with Shared Decision Making Parents, and Autonomy Parents. Table 5 presents the Minimum D^2 values, discriminant function loadings and the discriminant function coefficients for the variables included in the model. Discriminant loadings measure the linear correlation between each independent variable and the discriminant function, and the discriminant function coefficients indicate

[9] This procedure is recommended for maximal use of available information (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995).

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the relative contribution of its associated variable to the function.[10]

Table 5. Discriminant Analysis of Teacher and School Characteristics by Teacher Influence Groups

Variable	Minimum D^2	Discriminant Function Loading	Standardized Discriminant Function Coefficient
School's Partnership with Parents	1.567***	.728	.483
Satisfied with Shared Decision Making	1.550***	.596	.342
Parent Influence	1.751***	.582	.460
Classroom Autonomy	1.765***	.546	.323
Wilk's Lambda			.693
X^2			62.343
p (X^2)			.001
Canonical correlation			.554
Group Centroids			
Low Influence			-.924
High Influence			.474

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

The discriminant analysis resulted in a significant function (X^2 =62.34, p<.001) with four school characteristics contributing the discriminating power of the function. As indicated by the standardized discriminant function coefficients, School's Partnership with Parents contributed the most. According to the discriminant function, differences between teachers in the Low and High Teacher Influence were based on teachers' perceptions of the School's Partnership with Parents (.483), Parent Influence (.460), Satisfaction with Shared Decision Making (.342) and Classroom Autonomy (.323).

It is not surprising that the variables included in the model are all closely linked to teachers' perceptions of shared decision making since the function itself discriminates on the basis of teachers' perceptions of their own influence on school decision making. A certain amount of covariance would be expected between the model and the dependent

[10] Independent variables with relatively large coefficients contribute more to the discriminating power of the function than do variables with smaller coefficients.

certain amount of covariance would be expected between the model and the dependent variable. The analyses showed that, based on the canonical correlation coefficient[11], 30.7% of the variance in the dependent variable, Teacher Influence, could be accounted for by this model. The basis for the comparison between the two groups were the group centroids[12] which indicated that there was a notable distance of both groups, Low Teacher Influence (-.924) and High Teacher Influence (.474), from the zero point of the discriminant function.

The classification matrix[13] that was obtained from the discriminant analysis indicated that, based on the model, 77% of the grouped cases were correctly classified. The function predicted that 36 (18% of the sample) of the respondents would be in the Low Teacher Influence group, and that 115 (59% of the sample) would be in the High Teacher Influence group. The proportion of cases that were correctly classified, Hit Ratio, is considered to have an acceptable level of predictive accuracy if it is at least one-fourth greater (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995) than the classification attributed to chance, the Proportional Chance Criteria[14]. Since the Hit Ratio (.77) is more than one-fourth greater than the Proportional Chance Criteria (.608), the function is considered to have an acceptable level of predictive accuracy.

In summary, teachers who perceive themselves as having high influence in decision making appear to perceive their schools' relationship to parents as being one of partnership or teacher empowerment. In contrast, teachers who perceive themselves as having little influence in decision making are more likely to view the relationship as one

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[11] The square of the canonical correlation coefficient represents the variance; $(.554)^2 = .3069$.

[12] The distance between the groups from the mean or the zero point of the discriminant function.

[13] The matrix helps to determine the extent to which the function is a valid predictor for Teacher Influence.

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of no partnership or teacher empowerment. Moreover, teachers in the High Teacher Influence group tend to express greater satisfaction with the level of shared decision making than those teachers in the Low Teacher Influence group. Another discriminating characteristic is the perception of power as classroom autonomy. Teachers who viewed themselves as having high influence in decision making were more likely to associate power with having greater classroom autonomy (i.e., more involvement in decision making at the classroom level). Finally, the majority of the respondents viewed parents as having little influence in decision making. However, a slightly larger percent of the teachers in the High Teacher Influence group appear to perceive parents as having similar influence in decision making. This is consistent with the view of a partnership relationship.

Conclusions and Implications

Teacher professionalism and parent involvement are commonly identified as essential components of school restructuring. Both place great emphasis on participation in decision making. Nevertheless, progress in moving toward a partnership of collaboration between teachers and parents has proven to be slow and cautiously laborious. Teacher professionalism and parent involvement have brought on a sense of empowerment, placing teachers and parents in a position to participate in, or influence, schoolwide decision making (Murphy & Evertson, 1990; Fine, 1993, Sarason, 1996). But the collaboration between teachers and parents does not come about if power is perceived as a give-and-take condition for which they must compete.

This examination of teachers' perceptions of the influence of teachers and parents

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[14] Proportional Chance Criteria = $(65/196)^2 + (131/196)^2$.

in decision making provides insight on the power-based modes of teacher-parent participation (Bauch & Goldring, 1998). In a traditional relationship, neither teacher nor parent is perceived to be in a position of influence, that is, power. Teacher professionalism describes a relationship in which teachers have more influence than parents do. Parent empowerment reflects a reverse situation, with parents having greater influence in school. Lastly, teacher-parent partnership describes a relationship of mutual participation in shared decision making.

Although there is a consensus that shared decision making is important for schoolwide success, the study is able to distinguish between teachers who perceive to have low or high influence in the process. However, it is interesting to note that there are no significant differences between these two groups that may be attributed to teacher characteristics. Among these characteristics, award status was expected to have been the most salient since it was the basis on which the survey was conducted. The perception of having influence on decision making is not based on award status, highest degree obtained, or even years of teaching experience.

Nonetheless, there are certain school characteristics that are associated with the perception of teacher influence on decision making. Middle and high school teachers are more likely than elementary teachers to perceive themselves as having little influence in decision making. This may be due to the more departmentalized organizational structure in secondary schools; the direct influence of the individual teacher is less evident in a highly hierarchical system.

Classroom autonomy is another school characteristic that is associated with teachers' view of their influence on decision making. Teachers who equate power with

classroom autonomy are more likely to consider themselves as having influence. Classroom autonomy is described as being allowed to make decisions and being directly involved in their implementation. Therefore, a sense of participation is essential for teachers to perceive themselves as having influence in the school's decision making process. However, classroom autonomy is not, in itself, an indicator of teachers' perception of influence in decision making. As the study shows, some teachers who equate power with classroom autonomy view themselves as having little influence in decision making. Further analysis is suggested to determine the extent of association between classroom autonomy and influence in decision making. But the classroom autonomy construct should reflect the teachers' reported experience and not how they perceive power.

In addition to school level and classroom autonomy, three other school characteristics appear to be relevant to how teachers view their role in the decision making process. The three traits are identified as parent influence in decision making, the school's relationship to parents, and teachers' satisfaction with the level of shared decision making. All three reflect the teachers' perception of the school and, to this extent, the association is to be expected. Teachers who describe their schools' relationship to parents as being one of teacher professionalism or of partnership see themselves as having influence in decision making. Whether the relationship is one of partnership or of teacher professionalism, parents are generally viewed as not having much influence; a small, but significant, percent of teachers with perceived high influence consider parents to play a similar role in decision making.

It is clear that teachers tend to express less satisfaction with the level of shared

decision making in their schools if they view themselves as not playing a major role in the process. However, there are teachers who see themselves as having influence yet not being satisfied with the level of shared decision making. This apparent inconsistency may be due to the limited role that parents seem to have in decision making. The most prevalent type of school relationship to parents appears to be teacher professionalism. Yet, some teachers may be seeking a more balanced participation with parents in decision making. Further analysis is needed to examine this possible association, with teachers and parents playing significant roles in the school's decision-making process.

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Appendix A

Constructs

Shared Decision-Making Beliefs		**Loadings**
viq88	When teachers have greater opportunities to collaborate and share information with colleagues, it is easier to be a successful teacher.	.649
viq90a	Teacher involvement in shared decision making is important for increased professionalism.	.926
viq90b	Teacher involvement in shared decision making is important for school improvement.	.901
viq90c	Teacher involvement in shared decision making is important for better school morale.	.908
viq90d	Teacher involvement in shared decision making is important for job satisfaction.	.909
viq91	Teachers are accountable for decisions made through a shared decision-making process.	.610

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis
Reliability of Shared Decision Making: .915 (Cronbach's Alpha)

Intercorrelation Matrix: Shared Decision-Making Beliefs

	viq88	viq90a	viq90b	viq90c	viq90d	viq91
viq88	1.00					
viq90a	.5291*	1.00				
viq90b	.5119*	.9255*	1.00			
viq90c	.4516*	.8667*	.8842*	1.00		
viq90d	.4825*	.8581*	.8441*	.9322*	1.00	
viq91	.3242*	.4634*	.4637*	.5297*	.5498*	1.00

*$p \leq .001$

Appendix A

Constructs

Teacher Influence		Loadings
viiq92b	Teacher influence in setting school goals.	.609
viiq92c	Teacher influence in setting school policies for discipline.	.698
viiq92d	Teacher influence in how the school budget is spent.	.643
viiq92e	Teacher influence in what is taught	.669
viiq92f	Teacher influence in setting academic standards	.704
viiq92g	Teacher influence in setting the school's grading policy.	.699
viiq92l	Teacher influence in determining the content of inservice programs.	.698

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis
Reliability of Teacher Influence: .8365 (Cronbach's Alpha)

Intercorrelation Matrix: Teacher Influence

	viiq92b	viiq92c	viiq92d	Viiq92e	viiq92f	viiq92g	viiq92l
viiq92b	1.00						
viiq92c	.4663*	1.00					
viiq92d	.3707*	.5282*	1.00				
viiq92e	.3094*	.4242*	.3923*	1.00			
viiq92f	.4072*	.4481*	.3351*	.5987*	1.00		
viiq92g	.3366*	.4592*	.3359*	.4819*	.6013*	1.00	
viiq92l	.4492*	.4265*	.3939*	.3057*	.3903*	.4077*	1.00

*$p \leq .001$

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Appendix A

Constructs

Parent Influence		Loadings
viiq92c	Parent influence in setting school policies for discipline.	.650
viiq92e	Parent influence in what is taught	.782
viiq92f	Parent influence in setting academic standards	.758
viiq92g	Parent influence in setting the school's grading policy.	.711
viiq92l	Parent influence in determining the content of inservice programs.	.739
viiq92o	Parent influence in determining the amount of homework assigned.	.671

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis
Reliability of Parent Influence: .8444 (Cronbach's Alpha)

Intercorrelation Matrix: Parent Influence

	viiq93c	viiq93e	viiq93f	viiq93g	viiq93l	viiq93o
viiq93c	1.00					
viiq93e	.4637*	1.00				
viiq93f	.5264*	.6230*	1.00			
viiq93g	.4590*	.5535*	.6434*	1.00		
viiq93l	.3052*	.5400*	.4022*	.4549*	1.00	
viiq93o	.3159*	.4787*	.4559*	.3765*	.5240*	1.00

*$p \leq .001$

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Appendix B

Power Construct

Classroom Autonomy		Loadings
Iiq10	An empowered educator is one who is allowed to make decisions.	.714
Iiq11	An empowered educator is one who is afforded direct involvement in the implementation of decisions.	.719
Iiq12	An empowered educator is one who is free to make changes.	.698
Iiq15	The relationship between responsibility and power in my school is access to power is gained through acceptance of responsibility.	.763
Iiq16	Responsibility equals power.	.693
Iiq17	Responsibility and power are reciprocal, i.e., each being nested within the other.	.710
Iiq18	Individuals are free to take on more responsibility thus more power.	.672
Iiq19	Responsibility is non-abuse of power.	.578

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis
Reliability of Classroom Autonomy: .8320 (Cronbach's Alpha)

Intercorrelation Matrix: Classroom Autonomy

	iiq10	iiq11	iiq12	iiq15	iiq16	iiq17	iiq18	iiq19
iiq10	1.00							
iiq11	.639***	1.00						
iiq12	.639***	.582***	1.00					
iiq15	.423***	.556***	.369***	1.00				
iiq16	.251***	.269***	.273***	.387***	1.00			
iiq17	.350***	.345***	.289***	.534***	.522***	1.00		
iiq18	.300***	.332***	.296***	.495***	.472***	.588***	1.00	
iiq19	.279***	.286***	.312***	.439***	.208**	.354***	.373***	1.00

**p≤.01, ***p≤.001

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Appendix C

Intercorrelation Matrix: Shared Decision-Making and Classroom Autonomy Constructs

	Shared Decision Making	Teacher Influence	Parent Influence	Classroom Autonomy	School's Partnership with Parents	Teacher Satisfaction
Shared Decision Making	1.00					
Teacher Influence	.182*	1.00				
Parent Influence	.058	.397***	1.00			
Classroom Autonomy	.168*	.415***	.204**	1.00		
School's Partnership with Parents	.154*	.524***	.239***	.358***	1.00	
Teacher Satisfaction	-.106	.479***	.260***	.341***	.561***	1.00

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001